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OUR SPRING BIRDS.—SWALLOWS.

HERE are six species of the hirundo or swallow family, that abide with us during the warm season, viz: the barn, the republican, the blue green or white bellied, the purple martin, the bank, and the chimney swallow.

The barn swallows generally come earliest, arriving within the first half of the month of April. You may always know of their arrival, by the shrill but enlivening note with which they greet familiar scenes, as they dart, meteor-like, along, now veering to the right, then to the left, far above your head. They are soon seen passing in and out of the knot-holes and other crevices of the farmer's barn, on the cross rafters of which they build their nests; and it has been proved that pairs return, year after year, to the same nesting place.

Old and mossy barns, through the cranies of which the wind sings mournfully, and about which the grass welters in its influence, appear to be their favorite resorts, the older the better. In passing the farmer in the field, or the loiterer in the city's noisy street, they often dart within arm's length, or nearer, almost always hailing him with their shrill, roguish note, as much as to say, "Catch me if you can!" For a while, however, and until they get their nest repaired, we see little of them in the city's thoroughfares.

The whole upper parts of the barn swallow are of a glossy, steel-blue color, which descends rounding on the breast; lower parts of a reddish chestnut, and the outer feather on each side of the tail, is an inch longer than the others. In the female the under parts are lighter, and the exterior tail feathers not so long.

They build their nests of clay mud, mixed with straw in order to give them strength. The interior is first lined with fine hay and with feathers. Their eggs are five, and they generally rear two broods in a season.

Next arrive the republican or cliff swallows, the species which build in communities under the eaves of barns and other out-buildings—their first appearance being seldom later than the middle of April. With this species, as with the barn swallow, are associated ideas of waving grass fields, of deep blue skies, and the long bright days of summer. In their habits,

too, they remind us of the first described species. Now skimming over the surface of the water, anon mounting high in the heavens, then swarming in the meadow, doubling on their track, and sweeping to and fro, rapid almost as the light, it must be a quick eye that can follow them. Life seems but a round of enjoyment to them, and not inappropriate is the name "little winged seraphs," which we have somewhere applied to them. Joyously does the male, while clinging to the outside of his mud-built, oven-like nest, chatter to his mate who is sitting on her eggs or nurturing her young within; joyously does he go forth on "the wings of the morning," sweeping a circuit of miles, perhaps, to return with the dainty provision he has run down in his swift career; joyously does he mount in the evening sky and exalt in his wild freedom.

The upper parts of the republican swallow are black with bluish green reflections, throat and neck dull red, under parts grayish white—tail not forked like that of the barn species.

Nearly at the same time with the republican swallow, appears the green blue or white-bellied species familiar to many on account of his often seizing and retaining possession of the house erected for the purple martin. He has a guttural, though not disagreeable voice, but wants the pleasant disposition of the barn and republican species, and often quarrels with his fellows, when, like as not, a desperate battle ensues. The female lays four eggs, and rears two broods in a season.

The purple martins next arrive, ordinarily not far from the first of May, and leave the latter part of August with the young of the two broods which they have reared. This bird has a vast range of flight, some naturalists aver, from Terra del Fuego, or the extreme southern bound of South America, over the whole continent north, to the fur countries; and is everywhere looked upon with pleasure for its pleasant, companionable qualities. So well is this bird known, as to render a description of him superfluous; yet we cannot refrain from a few remarks as to his gracefulness of flight, in which he is excelled by no other bird. How often does he attract the eye, while sailing in the sky on a summer evening: far up, a mere speck, strongly relieved against the gold and crimson clouds that perchance slumber in the windless empyrean, as fearless and free he navigates the atmosphere.

Now, his keen eye is attracted by some insect, and he turns aside with quickly fluttering wings; again he floats leisurely along on extended pinions, momentarily uttering his few brief but highly pleasing notes. Presently, with surprising swiftness, he descends from his altitude, alights on the front of his little habitation, chatters awhile with his partner, who may be sitting on her nest, then is away again for the thin atmosphere of the upper heavens.

We have two other species of swallows that visit us to spend the summer, viz.: the bank swallow—nestling in holes in the edges of sand banks, which they excavate for the purpose, and the chimney swallow or swift.

The bank swallow is of duller plumage than either of the others, the upper parts being of a dark mouse color, lower white, with a band of brown across the breast—tail forked, the exterior feather edged with whitish.

The chimney swallow, which derives its name from its habit of nesting in chimneys, may be known by the extreme length of its wings, which, when closed, extend an inch and a half beyond the end of the tail, and by his short, wiry tail feathers. He arrives here about the middle of May.

Till America shall learn to love Art, not as an amusement, not as the mere ornament of her cities, not as a superstitious idea of what is *comme il faut* for a great nation, but for its harmonizing and ennobling energy, for its power to make men better by arousing in them a perception of their own instincts for what is beautiful, and sacred, and religious, and as an eternal rebuke to the base and the worldly, she will not have attained to that high sense that alone makes a nation out of a people, and raises it from a dead name to a living power. This lesson I learn from the past: that grace and goodness, the fair, the noble, and the free, will never cease out of the world, till the God from whom they emanate ceases out of it; that it is the sacred duty and noble office of the Poet to reveal and justify to men; that so long as the soul endures, endures also the theme of new and unexampled song; that while there is love in love, grace in grace, and beauty in beauty, God will send poets to find them, and bear witness of them, and hang their ideal portraiture in the gallery of memory. God, with us, is forever the mystical name of the hour that is passing.—J. R. L.